

February 10, 2023

Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Human Services Committee **in support of** *HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status*

To: Co-Chairs Senator Lesser and Representative Gilchrist, Ranking Members Senator Seminara and Representative Case, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is William Marut and I live in Glastonbury. I am a member of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and my congregation is a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a broad-based organization of 49 faith institutions working together to advance social justice in our region and state.

I am writing **in support of** *HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status*.

Personally, this issue matters to me because:

- My faith teaches me that every human being is a child of God and deserves to be cared for accordingly, regardless of their race, national origin, citizenship, or immigration status.
- My faith teaches me that it is the responsibility of a society to provide life-saving care to its members. I believe that health care is not only a human right, but a sacred duty.

I support this bill because:

- Many members of the immigrant community, including 58% of undocumented folks in our state, are without any form of health insurance to cover mental or physical health care (compared to just 5% of the overall population). In addition, being a member of a marginalized community increases the risk of mental health challenges due to the impacts of prejudice and systemic oppression. Meanwhile, undocumented people pay \$187 million annually in Connecticut taxes.
- According to an independent analysis by the RAND Corporation, if Connecticut expands HUSKY to all income-qualified people, regardless of immigration status, roughly 21,400 currently uninsured people will gain coverage, providing vast benefits in quality of life, family stability, school attendance, workforce participation, and more. This cost of this expansion would represent only 3% of the state's annual Medicaid budget. Furthermore, much of this cost would be balanced out by savings in expenses for emergency Medicaid and uncompensated care.

- Extending insurance access until age 26, as this bill does, would match the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, whose policymakers recognized that emerging adults (including parents, workers, and students), their families, and society as a whole do better when people have continuous access to care during this period. This best practice should be applied to all, regardless of immigration status.

Expanding HUSKY to undocumented people is not a controversial issue and is supported by a majority of Connecticut voters. 57% of voters support expanding HUSKY to all undocumented immigrants, including 84% of Democrats, 83% of Black voters, and 76% of Latinx voters.

Expanding HUSKY access to all income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, will meaningfully expand access to mental (as well as physical) health care to people who are currently excluded. It is economically sensible, and more than that, it is the moral, just, and faithful thing to do. HB 6616 is an important step in this direction. **Please advance this bill out of committee in its current form, and then champion it in the full legislature.** I look forward to supporting your efforts.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

William Marut
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